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used ineffectively to illustrate the keenness of Geraint's glance at Enid as she appears arrayed in the faded silk she wore when first he saw her ; in the other case, the keenness of his glance at her when she disobeyed him in order to warn him of dangers in the way. As a simile, it seems not to have sprung spontaneously from the contemplation of the subject it is supposed to illustrate, but, in the moment of conception, to have been wholly detached from any such subject. If not the appropriateness, then doubtless it was the cadence of the line—Pope's cadence, softened and quickened by Tennyson—that made the poet preserve and repeat it, and indeed causes it to run in a reader's mind long after its application is forgotten.

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THE OLD OAKEN BUCKET.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS :—Apropos of the widespread indebtedness of American writers of the early nineteenth century to Byron, it may be of interest to point out that the familiar *Old Oaken Bucket* borrows its form and several of its phrases from Byron's *On a Distant View of the Village and School of Harrow on the Hill*. The *Distant View* appeared in *Hours of Idleness* (1807). Samuel Woodworth's sentimental verses were first published in *Melodies, Duets, Trios, Songs and Ballads*, 1826. The first two lines of the *Distant View* are :

"Ye scenes of my childhood, whose loved recollection
Embitters the present compared to the past ;"

the opening lines of *The Old Oaken Bucket* :

"How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood,
When fond recollection presents them to view ;
The orchard, the meadow, the deep-tangled wildwood,
And every loved spot which my infancy knew."

Byron's verses conclude :

"But if, through the course of the years which await me,
Some new scene of pleasure should open to view,
I will say, while with rapture the thought shall elate me,
'Oh ! such were the days which my infancy knew.'"

The preface to the collected edition of Woodworth's poems (1861), gives an elaborate account of how Woodworth, after drinking a glass of water, said casually that the water would have

tasted better out of the bucket in the old well at home, whereupon his wife remarked : "Wouldn't that make a good subject for a poem?"—and the verses were composed forthwith. Of the fact that the versifier was compelled to journey home to the "cot of his father" by the somewhat roundabout route of Harrow on the Hill, the preface apparently makes no account.

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A NEW READING IN *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS :—In line 241 (stanza xxvii, l. 7) of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, that line so greatly admired by Leigh Hunt,

Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray,
all the printed editions read, "pray," and so far as I know, no one has ever questioned that the meaning is "offer prayers." The original manuscript doubtless has the same reading, as Buxton Forman gives no indication to the contrary. The association of ideas between "pray" and "missal" helps to make the established reading seem natural.

For all that, I believe the true reading to be "prey." It is, in the first place, quite conceivable that Keats should have written "pray," intending "prey." His spelling was not infallible ; from Buxton Forman's collation of the manuscript, it appears that in this very poem he wrote "tripple," "hony," "plummes," "Deamons," etc., etc. Besides, the spelling "pray" for "prey" is common in Keats's favorite poet, Spenser (*Faerie Queene* III. vii. 36. 6 ; v. iv. 14. 8 ; VI. x. 40. 1 ; etc.). If we thus have the choice between two possible interpretations, there are certainly reasons for preferring that here suggested. If we are to imagine the missal as "doubly cherished for the danger" (Leigh Hunt) the danger from marauding Paynims will surely be greater than that from Paynims who simply say their prayers. And in the romantic epics of chivalry, of which Keats had imbibed the spirit, the characteristic of the Paynims is not their piety, but precisely their preying upon Christian knight and lady.

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